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ABSTRACT

Selected comparisons of first-time international and domestic freshmen at the University of Southern California (USC) were undertaken, using data from the annual Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) and the American Council on Education Freshman Survey. On-campus enrollment data for these two student groups are presented by sex for Fall 1978, 1979, and 1980. USC was the first choice of at least 75 percent of the entering international and domestic freshmen, and female freshmen were more likely than male freshmen to make USC their first choice. Academic reputation was selected by about 75 percent of the entering international and domestic freshmen as their reason for choosing to attend USC. Reactions of the two groups of students to the following possible reasons for choosing to attend USC are presented: academic reputation, USC student advice, special educational programs, relative's influence, friend's influence, and financial assistance. Business, engineering and "other professional" were the areas most attractive to international and domestic freshmen. Academic majors planned by at least 10 percent of respondents to the 1980 Fall Freshman Survey are indicated. Domestic female freshmen appeared somewhat more likely to select social science and "other professional" (architecture, pharmacy, pre-dentistry, pre-medicine, and public administration) than domestic male freshmen; international male freshmen also appeared more likely to select engineering and "other professional" but less likely to select business than international female freshmen. About half of the two student groups planned to earn at least a bachelor's degree at USC, and almost a third of the international students planned USC studies through the master's level. (SW)

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First-time International and Domestic Freshmen: Enrollment Trends and Characteristics (OIS Research Memo 81-103)

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OIS Research Memo 81-103
March 1981

First-time International and Domestic Freshmen: Enrollment Trends and Characteristics

Prepared by: J.U. Overall

This memorandum contains selected comparisons of first-time international and domestic freshmen. Data were obtained from 1) the annual Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) fall enrollment reports filed with federal and state agencies by the Office of Institutional Studies (OIS) and 2) the annual ACE Freshman Survey. A first-time freshman is defined as one who has not taken post-high school courses for credit at a 2-year or 4-year college or university in the United States.

I. HEGIS Enrollment Data

In recent years, international students have come to represent an increasing proportion of USC's entering first-time freshman class. The largest number of these freshmen entered in the fall of 1978. In subsequent semesters, their proportion of total first-time enrollment and the actual number enrolling initially declined and subsequently leveled off (see Table One). Table One also indicates that international freshmen represented approximately the same proportion of total first-time freshman enrollment (12%) during the past two years.

Table One

First-time International and Domestic Freshman, by Sex, Enrolled On-Campus in Fall 1978, 1979 and 1980*

	Male			Female			Total		
	1978	1979	1980	1978	1979	1980	1978	1979	1980
International	250	212	208	158	131	104	408	343	312
(% of total)	(15.4)	(13.9)	(15.2)	(12.8)	(10.9)	(9.3)	(14.3)	(12.6)	(12.6)
Domestic	1370	1304	1161	1080	1068	1012	2450	2372	2173
(% of total)	(84.6)	(86.1)	(84.8)	(87.2)	(89.1)	(90.7)	(85.7)	(87.4)	(87.4)
Total	1620	1516	1369	1238	1199	1116	2858	2715	2485

* Information taken from the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) Fall Enrollment reports for the years indicated

It should be noted that HEGIS reporting guidelines require that data for any enrollee which cannot be allocated into the male/female or domestic/international classification be prorated to these categories using ratios for known data. This proration had little effect on data for fall 1978 and 1980, but did compensate for the approximately 11% of fall 1979 enrollees who could not be classified as international or domestic due to missing information. Proportional representation of international students using non-prorated data was about 1% less than that found using prorated data; however, enrollment trends were not affected by data type.

II. Selected comparisons of international and domestic first-time freshman responses to the fall 1980 ACE Freshman Survey

For the first time in USC's history, American Council on Education Freshman Survey data for first-time international freshmen have been collected and will be included in the annual report of findings based on this survey. This data collection was made possible by the cooperative efforts of the American Language Institute, Office of International Students, Office of Institutional Studies, Office of Student Affairs, and Student Administrative Services.

Tables Two through five present selected response comparisons. Response comparisons for all the survey items will be published in a subsequent report. Information concerning the international student sample used in these comparisons is presented in Appendix I.

A. Interest in/Reasons for Selecting USC

**USC was the first choice of at least 75% of the entering international and domestic freshmen (see Table Two)*

At least 75% of the first-time entering freshmen favored USC over all the other institutions to which they applied. Female freshmen were more likely than male freshmen to make USC their #1 choice.

Table Two

USC was First Choice for % of Freshmen*

International			Domestic		
Male (n=90)	Female (n=38)	Total (n=128)	Male (n=204)	Female (n=222)	Total (n=426)
74%	79%	75%	77%	81%	79%

* Information taken from American Council on Education's Survey of Entering Freshmen, Fall 1980, conducted at USC

* *Academic reputation was selected by about 75% of the entering international and domestic freshmen as their reason for choosing to attend USC (see Table Three)*

Entering international and domestic freshman reactions to 11 possible reasons for choosing to attend USC are presented below.

Table Three

Reasons Selected by More Than 20% of Entering Freshmen as "Very Important" with respect to Attending USC*

	International			Domestic		
	Male (n=90)	Female (n=38)	Total (n=128)	Male (n=199)	Female (n=216)	Total (n=415)
USC has a very good academic reputation	64%	89%	71%	73%	78%	76%
A USC student advised me to come here	25%	46%	32%	+	+	+
USC offers special educational programs	26%	38%	30%	33%	39%	36%
Relatives wanted me to come here	24%	37%	28%	+	+	+
A friend advised me to come here	27%	29%	24%	+	+	+
I was offered financial assistance	+	+	+	30%	32%	31%

* Information was taken from American Council of Education's Survey of Entering Freshmen, Fall 1980, conducted at USC

+ Item selected by 20% or less of the respondents

USC's academic reputation was the primary reason indicated for both international and domestic freshmen. The availability of financial assistance and particular educational programs offered by USC were also influential for domestic freshmen. For international freshmen, the availability of particular educational programs was important, as was advice from friends, relatives and other USC students.

B. Educational Plans

**Business, engineering and "other professional" are the areas most attractive to international and domestic freshmen (see Table Four)*

Academic majors planned by at least 10% of respondents to the 1980 Fall Freshman Survey are shown below.

Table Four

Academic Majors Planned by at Least 10% of Entering USC Freshmen*

	International			Domestic		
	Male (n=90)	Female (n=38)	Total (n=128)	Male (n=204)	Female (n=222)	Total (n=426)
Arts & Humanities	-	11%	2%	15%	16%	16%
Business	19%	29%	22%	23%	21%	22%
Engineering	53%	13%	41%	21%	6%	13%
"Other Professional"	14%	8%	13%	12%	16%	14%
Social Science	+	+	+	8%	14%	11%
Undecided	3%	21%	9%	6%	6%	6%

*Information taken from American Council on Education's Survey of Entering Freshmen, Fall 1980, conducted at USC

+Major selected by less than 10% of total

This table indicates that business, engineering, and "other professional" (architecture, pharmacy, pre-dentistry, pre-medicine and public administration) are the areas in which most of the domestic and international freshmen plan to major. Domestic female freshmen appear somewhat more likely to select "other professional" and social science than domestic male freshmen; international male freshmen appear more likely to select engineering and "other professional" but less likely to select business than international female freshmen. International students appear much more likely to select engineering than domestic students. International female freshmen appear much more likely to be undecided about their academic major at entry than other entering freshmen.

**About half the international and domestic entering freshmen plan to earn at least an AB or BS at USC; almost a third of the international students plan USC studies through the masters level (see Table Five)*

The highest degree planned by international and domestic students at USC is shown below.

Table Five

Highest Degree Planned by Entering Freshmen While at USC*

	International			Domestic		
	Male (n=90)	Female (n=38)	Total (n=128)	Male (n=190)	Female (n=205)	Total (n=395)
AB/BS	39%	56%	44%	57%	54%	56%
AM/MS	38%	36%	38%	24%	25%	24%
PhD/EdD	15%	8%	12%	6%	6%	6%
MD/DDS/LLD	8%	+	6%	12%	12%	12%
Other	+	+	+	1%	3%	2%

* Information taken from American Council on Education's Survey of Entering Freshmen, Fall 1980, conducted at USC

This table indicates that roughly half the international and domestic freshmen plan to complete AB or BS degrees here; another third of the international and fourth of the domestic freshmen plan studies through the masters level. USC degree plans for domestic females and males appear similar; international female frosh are more likely to plan USC baccalaureate degrees, but slightly less likely to plan them at the masters level--at least at USC--than their male counterparts. The various implications of these findings have not been completely explored, but they may have some revelance to recruitment and retention. For example, it would be interesting to learn if those freshmen planning study at USC through the masters level at the time they enter had different retention percentages than those who did not.

Appendix I

Characteristics of First-time International Freshman Respondents to the ACE Freshman Survey, Fall 1980

Questionnaires were sent to first-time international freshmen identifie from rosters supplied by Student Administrative Services. Names of respondents who indicated any post-high school course work were cross-checked with OISS records to determine if any of this course work had been completed at a US post-secondary institution. In addition, the American Language Institute distributed questionnaires to advanced students who were concurrently enrolled in regular university courses. A total of 128 respondents from both groups were determined to fit the HEGIS definition of a first-time freshman; their responses provided the basis for the international/domestic freshman comparisons.

The following characteristics of this sample should be noted. Based on the 312 first-time freshmen identified for HEGIS reporting purposes, a response rate of 41% (128/312) was assumed. About 67% of the HEGIS first-time international freshmen were males and 33% were females; 65% of the ACE international freshman respondents were male and 35% were female. Percentage representation by country of origin for students in the ACE sample was also calculated. These percentages were compared with similar data reported by OISS (ref: October 24, 1980 memo entitled International Students Report Fall 1980) for the 10 countries providing the largest number of new international students. In nine of the 10 comparisons percentages were within $\pm$ 2%; the ACE Survey group had 4% more Indonesians responding than were indicated in the OISS report.